

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

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P R 251203Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5186

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0441

AFDROUGHT

AF/W FOR BISHOP, AFR/CWR FOR SHEAR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, SWEL, MR

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR MAURITANIA

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 0321, STATE 041561, STATE 043063 (NOTAL), ROME

2429, NOUAKCHOTT 0335, NOUAKCHOTT 0356, NOUAKCHOTT 0395

1. BELIEVE THAT MISUNDERSTANDING HAS ARISEN CONCERNING GIRM FOOD REQUEST AND MANNER IN WHICH MISSION SUGGESTS USG RESPOND. ALTHOUGH DETAILS DIFFER, FEEL THAT WFP REQUEST IS PROBABLY OSRO REACTION TO GIRM REQUEST CONTAINED NOUAKCHOTT 0321. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE VAT USG SHOULD RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST BI-LATERALLY, NOT THROUGH WFP, AND THAT FOOD SHOULD BE PROVIDED ON HUMANITARIAN BASIS AS RESULT OF DEMONSTRATED NEED, AND TO DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT FOR OULD DADDAH GOVERNMENT AT THIS IMPORTANT JUNCTURE.

2. FURTHER BELIEVE THAT BI-LATERAL PROGRAM IS DESIRABLE NOT ONLY FOR PURPOSE SHOWING DEFINITE USG CONCERN FOR GIRM NEEDS, RATHER THAN BURYING ASSISTANCE IN OVERALL WFP PROGRAM, BUT ALSO BECAUSE
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BI-LATERAL PROGRAM WOULD RUN MUCH LESS RISK OF DIVERSION THAN WFP

PROGRAM. AS NOTED NOUAKCHOTT 0395, GIRM REQUEST DOES INCLUDE FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN SAHARA. THIS WOULD BE SUPPLIED OUT OF NOUADHIBOU AND POSSIBLY NOUAKCHOTT. SINCE, HOWEVER, USG BILATERAL SHIPMENTS WOULD GO TO ROSSO, WHICH PLANNED AS SHIPPING POINT TO EAST, IT IS MUCH LESS LIKELY THAT GIRM WOULD HAUL FROM ROSSO TO SAHARA WHEN OTHER STOCKS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN NOUADHIBOU AND NOUAKCHOTT.

3. FRANCE HAS AGREED SUPPLY 4000 TONS WHEAT. FED SUPPLYING 7700 TONS FOOD, OF WHICH 2200 TO NOUADHIBOU AND REMAINDER TO NOUAKCHOTT. FED REP GERMANY HAS DECIDED TO SUPPLY 5000 TONS WHEAT.

4. SUGGEST THAT USG PLAN PROVIDE 5000 TONS SFSG OR WHEAT AND 500 TOE ULK (BASED ON INDICATION STATE 043063 THAT WHEAT AND MILK WOULD BE AVAILABLE) ASAP TO DAKAR FOR TRANSSHIPMENT ROSSO OR DIRECT TO EAST VIA SENEGAL (SEE PARA 5). THIS WOULD BE 3-4 MONTH SUPPLY FOR EAST. SINCE RAINS IN EAST BEGIN JULY, FOOD WOULD NEED ARRIVE ROSSO MAY-JUNE FOR TRUCKING. SINCE ADEQUATE WAREHOUSING FOR THIS QUANTITY EXISTS ROSSO, IF SHIPMENT DID NOT ARRIVE IN TIME, COULD BE PROPERLY STORED UNTIL END OF RAINS. SUGGEST THAT ADDITIONAL SHIPMENT 5-10,000 TONS BE PLANNED QCBUT NOT SHIPPED UNTIL AFTER ARRIVAL ORIGINAL SHIPMENT SO THAT WE CAN EVALUATE SITUATION AND GIRM PERFORMANCE ON INITIAL SHIPMENT.

5. BELIEVE MOST QUESTIONS STATE 041561 WERE ALREADY ANSWERED IN NOUAKCHOTT 0321 AND AMPLIFIED IN SUBSEQUENT REPORTING: WHILE WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT US FOOD WOULD NOT BE USED IN SAHARA OR BY MILITARY, BELIEVE THAT SHIPMENT TO RO WOULD MINIMIZE THIS POSSIBILITY. AGAIN, WHILE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION WILL BE AVAILABLE, THIS ALWAYS HAVING BEEN ONE OF OUR PRIMARY CONCERNS, SITUATION NOW LOOKS MORE HOPEFUL THAN BEFORE. IN ADDITION, WE ARE EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF RAIL SHIPMENT FROM DAKAR TO KAYES AND TRANSSHIPMENT VIA TRUCK TTKAIUUN AND NEMA. WHILE RAIL-TRUCK COMBINATION MIGHT INCREASE US FREIGHT EXPENDITURES SLIGHTLY, IT WOULD VIRTUALLY GUARANTEE NO DIVERSION FROM EASTERN REGION.

6. ON 24 FEBRUARY, FFPO HAD LONG MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER (DROUGHT CO-ORDINATOR). MINISTER INDICATED THAT 500 LAND ROVERS AND 20 TRUCKS ORDERED BY MILITARY WOULD ARRIVE NEXT FEW WEEKS. AT THAT TIME, THE PORTION OF THE OPERATION VIVRES TRUCK FLEET STILL

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BEING USED BY MILITARY WOULD BE RELEASED. OTHER PORTION ALREADY RELEASED. PLANNED HAVE VEHICLES UNDERGO ANY NECESSARY REPAIRS TO BE READY FOR FOOD HAULING. MINISTER SAID WOULD ALSO PROVIDE NECESSARY PERSONNEL TO OPERATE VEHICLES. WHILE GIRM HAD STILL NOT DECIDED IF DEFENSE MINISTER OR CEREALS OFFICE WOULD CONDUCT TRANSPORTATION OPERATION THIS YEAR, MINISTER READY TO DETAIL EXPERIENCED MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO HAD CONDUCTED OPERATION VIVRES TO CEREALS OFFICE, IF IT GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY. HE COMMENTED THAT HE

DID NOT THINK CEREALS OFFICE EAGER ASSUME THIS RESPONSIBILITY AND SO, WHILE WOULD PREFER TO UNLOAD IT, HE WILLING CARRY ON IN ORDER MAKE SURE THIS IMPORTANT TASK DONE RIGHT.

7. MINISTER SAID HE HOPED US WOULD BE ABLE MAKE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION, SINCE IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF FOOD HELP FOR MAURITANIA. HE SAID INITIAL SHIPMENT OF 5000-10,000 TONS TO ROSSO WOULD BE OF GREAT HELP IF IT COULD ARRIVE BEFORE RAINS. FFPO EXPLAINED THAT SUCH SHIPMENT WOULD LIKELY TAKE SOME THREE MONTHS WHICH WOULD LEAVE LITTLE TIME FOR HAULING BEFORE RAINS. MINISTER SAID HE WOULD CONCENTRATE TRUCKS AT ROSSO, AS HAD BEEN DONE IN PAST, OR IF SHIPMENT ARRIVED AFTER START OF RAINS WOULD STORE FOOD IN ROSSO. HE COMMENTED THAT PRIMARY PRESENT NEEDS WERE EAST, SAHARA, AND EAST CENTRAL PARTS OF REGION 6 WHERE THINGS ALREADY SHORT.

8. FFPO EXPLAINED AID/W'S NEED TO KNOW OF COMMERCIAL PURCHASES. MINISTER SAID ONLY PRESENT GIRM PURCHASES WERE 900 TONS WHEAT FLOUR FOR SAHARA AND 2000 TONS LOCAL SORGHUM FOR RELIEF IN CENTRAL MAURITANIA. HE CONTINUED THAT GIRM STRAPPED AS RESULT UNEXPECTED EXPENSES FOR SAHARA OPERATION AND FRANKLY HOPED DONORS WOULD SUPPLY BULK OF FOOD NEEDS, DUE GIRM SHORTAGE OF FUNDS.

9. BELIEVE THAT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WE HAVE REASONABLE ASSURANCE THAT NECESSARY TRANSPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE. PROBLEM OF MONITORING AND DIVERSION POTENTIAL WOULD BE MINIMIZED BY SHIPMENT DAKAR FOR USE IN EAST, WHICH ACCESSIBLE AND WHOSE FOOD REQUIREMENTS (AND LOCATION IN SOUTHEAST AT MAXIMUM DISTANCE FROM SAHARA AND PRIMARY MILITARY CONCENTRATIONS) LIKELY PRECLUDE DIVERSION POSSIBILITY.

10. URGE THAT TA NOT REPEAT NOM INCLUDE ANY ADDITIONAL PENALTY RHAUSE, SUCH AS SUGGESTED STATE 041561. WE BELIEVE THAT GIRM HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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MADE THIS REQUEST IN GOOD FAITH FOR NEEDS OF PEOPLE, NOT FOR DIVERSION PURPOSES. TIMING OF REQUEST INDICATED, AS IN PAST, THAT GCJM REQUESTS SUCH ASSISTANCE ONLY WHEN IT FEELS IT CANNOT MEET FOOD NEEDS OF ITS POPULATION THROUGH ITS OWN RESOURCES. TO INCLUDE SUCH A CLAUSE WOULD BE CONSIDERED A SLAP IN THE FACE AND COULD HAVE ADVERSE REPERCUSSIONS ON ALL USG ACTIVITIES. WE URGE PROMPT ACTION ON FOOD ALLOCATION AS BILATERAL PROGRAM. HANDYSIDE

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